

Reforming Movements.

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It was at Deventer that Thomas a Kempis acquired what education he ever obtained; for, unlike Groote and Florentius, he never attended a university. Another celebrated pupil was Nicholas Krebs, of Cues on the Moselle, better known as the reforming Cardinal Cusanus. Here, too, at a later time, under the auspices of Alexander Hegius, the humanists Conrad Mutianus, Hermann von dem Busche, and, supreme over all, Erasmus, laid the foundation of their classic erudition. Florentius was also the founder of a convent of Augustinian canons regular at Windeshem, near Zwolle, and in the first half of the fifteenth century a considerable number of these Windeshem communities were established in the Netherlands and Germany. Like the Brethren they combined education with the religious life, and thus helped to nurture the reforming spirit. Neither the Brethren nor the Windeshem canons were hostile to the Church. They aimed at a reformation from within, and the Council of Constance vindicated their orthodoxy from the charges of the Dominican monk, Mathew of Grabow, and augmented the privileges of the Windeshem congregations. They were, however, swimming against the current of clerical degeneracy, which in the Netherlands, as elsewhere, made reform as difficult as it was urgent. Their efforts had therefore only a temporary and partial success, and by the end of the fifteenth century they had lost their earlier vitality, and were apparently swimming with the tide. Erasmus, who knew intimately the inside of one of these Windeshem monasteries at Steyn, near Gouda, gives no flattering reminiscences of his old fellow-monks, though he had painted the cloister life in attractive colours in one of his youthful productions. They indulged in tremendous drinking bouts, and their excesses were not limited to drunkenness. "Our drinking bouts were as little spiritual as was, in short, our whole manner of life, of which I know not what good remains if the so-called ceremonials be omitted." His attack on monkery in general was doubtless all the more poignant by reason of the personal impressions of these early days. Erasmus, the brightest meteor of the northern Renaissance, nevertheless, owed something to these fast degenerating Brethren and Augustinian canons. They had at least quickened the spirit of knowledge within

him ; and in him, as